## RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT IONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

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## PRESIDENT BEGAYE AND VICE PRESIDENT NEZ MEET WITH SECRETARY CLINTON TO DISCUSS CRITICAL ISSUES FACING THE NAVAJO NATION

PHOENIX-President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez attended a tribal leadership meeting with 67th U.S. Secretary of State and Democratic Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton yesterday at Carl Hayden High School Gymnasium in Phoenix, Ariz.

The Navajo Nation was represented among other Arizona tribes like the Gila River Indian Community, Tohono O'odham Nation, Camp Verde Yavapai-Apache and the Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation.

Many of the tribal leaders who met with Clinton had already endorsed her campaign for presidency.

"I was one that endorsed her early on," said Vice President Nez. Nez was one of the first tribal leaders to join the Hillary for America Arizona Leadership Council in early February.

President Begaye said it was really good for Clinton to sit down with tribal leaders and have a critical discussion about Native American issues.

"I think the Navajo Nation has gained the respect from the Clinton campaign," he said. "They know that we are leaders among tribal nations. I was able to help moderate the discussion at the meeting and it was very meaningful to talk about critical issues that are important to Navajo."

President Begaye said he brought up three issues he'd like to have addressed in regard to the Navajo Nation. One was that the Navajo Nation needs to have full authority and jurisdiction over non-Indians committing crime on the Navajo Nation. Secondly, the president said the Nation needs complete control over their natural resources. Lastly, the president asked for a cabinet level Native American position that will collaborate directly with the U.S. President.

"This position would combine all the resources of the federal agencies to address Indian issues," he said.

In meeting with Clinton, Vice President Nez said he brought up the issue of suicide prevention. Since December 2015, the



President Russell Begaye (right) applauded Secretary Clinton for meeting with tribal leadership to discuss critical issues facing Native communities.



In the meeting with tribal leaders, Vice President Jonathan Nez said there needs to be better collaboration between federal agencies and tribal nations. Above: Vice President Nez stands beside Secretary Clinton (center) and President Begaye. In the photo, Vice President Nez is joined by his son Christopher



During the Town Hall meeting, Secretary Clinton delivered strong messages about immigration reform, affordable higher education and debt-free tuition and gun control reform. "I am going to put together comprehensive immigration reform," she said.

Office of the President and Vice President has undertaken the Building Communities of Hope tour that addresses the problem of suicide on the Navajo Nation, as well as prevention and post-vention.

"We need to raise the awareness that suicide is a problem on the Navajo Nation. Today, we needed to let her know. She said she is supportive of getting more resources out to tribal nations," he said.

Vice President Nez also mentioned the need for better collaboration between federal agencies and tribal nations.

"It needs to be one-on-one," he said. "We need to continue the momentum moving forward from the Obama administration."

President Begaye discussed the need to defend the Indian

Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and keeping Indian children with their relatives before finding non-tribal foster parents.

"We talked about treaty rights, water rights and the federal government's involvement in establishing water rights. We told her that that Navajo Nation still has undefined water rights, especially in the state of Arizona. Secretary Clinton said she will follow up on these issues," President Begaye said. "I think, as a president, she will help us pursue the water rights that we need for the Navajo Nation."

President Begaye has yet to endorse a presidential candidate and said he still hopes to hear from the Republican candidates to hear their views on critical Native American issues.

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